THE

# HISTORY

OF THE MAN

# AFTER GOD's OWN HEART.

*Prove all things,*
*Hold fast that which is good.*

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THE Author of the following ſtrictures, is not without apprehenſion that he may excite the indignation of many worthy perſons, whoſe zeal may catch fire at ſo free a diſquiſition, on what they have always been taught to eſteem a ſacred character; this is what he ſhould be extremely ſorry for, but a blind reverence not having had ſufficient influence over him to make him read with his eyes ſhut, he has repreſented matters as they appear to him; giving his vouchers for every fact as he proceeds—he enters upon the inquiry from honeſt motives, and flatters himſelf that it will be acceptable to all who entertain adequate notions of the eternal rectitude of the creator. Thoſe who eſtimate a man's religion by his implicit faith, and think it their duty to ſtifle their living objections in compliance with the dead letter, (for objections they will have and very ſtrong ones too) will undoubtedly be ſhocked at this publication—ſuch will produce numerous texts in oppoſition, but can inſpired writings be inconſiſtent with themſelves?

The deſign is to diſcover how far the general tenor of David's conduct entitles him to the character of THE MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART—if he enjoys it juſtly, an examination, ſo far from ſullying his reputation will give it luſtre—if he does not enjoy it juſtly, will ſincere inquirers after truth regret being led to form a proper judgment where they have hitherto reſted with a diſſatisfied acquieſcence? To form an idea of the rectitude of his principles, we can only inſpect his actions—we have only to examine his life as contained in the old teſtament, where we ſhall find facts inconteſtable on which to found our opinion.

The Author is aware of two formidable obſtacles to his deſign.

I. The broken unconnected manner in which the Hiſtory is tranſmitted to us, which renders it impoſſible to give a complete narrative of any period in it.

II. The partial repreſentation of it, as being written by the Jews themſelves.

In

*In ſome meaſure to ſurmount theſe obſtacles, the Author aſſumes the liberty of giving* his *ſenſe to the paſſages which ſeem to be obſcure or miſrepreſented—this he hopes, will not be denied him, ſo long as there is no appearance of a forced conſtruction being put upon any of them, or of their being repreſented in any other light than what they would naturally appear in, if examined with the ſame freedom which is uſed in reading Tacitus, Rollin, or Rapin, and which ought to be uſed towards all;—but leſt it ſhould be thought that too great liberties are taken with the biblical writers, it may not be improper to mention that innumerable inſtances might be produced to ſhew that the authority of* the Lord, *ſo continually quoted to ſanctify every tranſaction, conſtituted in general nothing more than national phraſes which obtained univerſally among ſo bigoted a people; one twelfth part of whom were appropriated to the prieſthood.*

*Let no one then be ſo timid as to reſign an inclination to ſatisfy juſt doubts, or preſcribe limits to the exerciſe of his reaſoning faculties—an honeſt deſire to obtain truth will ſanctify the moſt rigid ſcrutiny into every thing. The love of truth ought to ſupersede every other conſideration; for every other conſideration is inferior to it. Truth requires no tenderneſs, and ſcorns all ſubterfuges.*

THE

# HISTORY, &c.

THE firſt eſtabliſhment of regal government among the Hebrews, was occaſioned by the corrupt adminiſtration of Joel and Abiah, the two ſons of Samuel; whom he had deputed to judge Iſrael in the decline of his life(a). The people, exaſperated at the oppreſſion they laboured under, roſe in a tumultuous manner, and applied to Samuel for redreſs; teſtifying a deſire to experience a different mode of government; by peremptorily demanding a King(b). At this, however, Samuel is greatly diſpleaſed; not that his ſons had tyrannized over the people; for of this he takes no manner of notice; neither exculpating them, nor promiſing the people redreſs: his chagrin was owing to the violent reſumption of the ſupreme magiſtracy out of the hands of his family; a circumſtance, for which he expreſſes the bittereſt reſentment(c). He conſults the Lord; and, not knowing elſe how the inſurrection might terminate, in his name yields to their deſires; promiſing them a king, with vengeance to them. *For* ſays the Lord, *they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I ſhould not reign over them*(d). The people, notwithſtanding, obſtinately perſiſted in their demand, and diſperſed not without a promiſe of compliance.

Samuel apparently choſe the moſt impartial method of electing a king; which was by lot, from among the people aſſembled by tribes; but, prudently pitches upon his man previous to the election; as the whole tenor of his conduct manifeſts that he intended to give them a king, in name; but to have one subordinate to his will. Opportunely for his purpoſe, Saul, a raw country lad, having rambled about to ſeek his father's aſſes, which had ſtrayed; and finding all ſearch after

(a) 1 Sam. viii. 3. (b) 1 Sam. viii 5. (c) Ver. 6, &c. (d) Ver. 7.

after them in vain, applied to Samuel as a prophet(a), with a fee in his hand, to gain intelligence of his beaſts.

We gather from ſeveral paſſages in Jewiſh hiſtory, that there were ſeminaries of prophets, *i. e.* the univerſities of the times; where youth were trained up to the myſtery of propheſying. We find there were falſe prophets, Non-conformiſts, not of the eſtabliſhment; we find that ſuch could even impoſe upon true ones(b): and we find moreover, by this inſtance, that prophets did not diſdain to give aſſiſtance in their prophetical character, concerning domeſtic matters, for reaſonable gratuities. A chief among the prophets, one who had been a judge over Iſrael, is applied to for intelligence concerning loſt cattle. But Saul not only found his aſſes, but a kingdom into the bargain; and had the ſpirit of the Lord given to him(c); which we find taken away(d) again, when he proved untractable; though it ſeems ſomewhat odd, that he ſhould prove diſobedient, while he acted under the influence of this divine Spirit!

After Samuel had in private(e) anointed Saul king, and told him his aſſes were already found, he diſmiſſed him. He next aſſembled the people for the election of a king: at which aſſembly, behold, the lot fell on the tribe of Benjamin; and in that, on the family of Matri; and ultimately, on Saul the ſon of Kiſh(f). An election ſomewhat reſembling conſiſtories for the election of biſhops; where the perſon being previouſly fixed upon, they pray ſolemnly to God, for a direction of their choice.

It is not intended here to give a detail of the reign of king Saul; the notice hitherto taken of him being merely becauſe the life of David could not be properly introduced without mentioning the cauſe of the alteration of government, and the manner in which monarchy was firſt eſtabliſhed; ſince Samuel's diſappointment in Saul, naturally leads to his ſimilar election of David.

The diſobedience of Saul, in ſparing one man, and ſome cattle, from a nation which Samuel in the name of the Lord commanded him utterly to extirpate(g); irrecoverably loſt him the favour of this imperious creator of Kings; and in the end produced the miſerable deſtruction not only of himſelf, but of all his family; which will occaſion no ſurprize, when we conſider the abſolute dominion and aſcendency which the Jewiſh clergy maintained over this ſuperſtitious people.

We are not to imagine that the ſparing Agag, king of the Amalekites, was the only cauſe of this rupture between him and

(a) 1 Sam. ix. 7. 8. (b) 1 Kings xiii. 18. (c) 1 Sam. x. 6. (d) Ch. xvi. 14. (e) Ch. x. 1. (f) Ver. 20. 21. (g) 1 Sam. xv. 3.

and Samuel. For we may gather from other parts of his hiſtory, that Saul was not over-well affected towards his patrons the Levites(a); whom he had too much ſpirit to continue under ſubjection to. This, however, was the occaſion on which Samuel choſe to declare himſelf(b); he haughtily avowed an intention of depoſing him(c); and ordering Agag to be brought into his preſence, he hewed him in pieces, *before the Lord*(d).

We now come to the Hero of the Hiſtory.

In purſuance of his intention to make another king, Samuel goes under the pretence of a ſacrifice, and anoints another ſhepherd boy(e); which was David, the youngeſt ſon of Jeſſe, the Bethlehemite; and gave him the ſpirit of the Lord, which he had juſt taken from poor Saul. The king in the mean time reflecting on the precarioufneſs of his ſituation, now that the prieſts, in the perſon of Samuel, were exaſperated againſt him; and well knowing their importance among his ſubjects, fell into a melancholy diſorder of mind(f), which his phyſicians were unable to remove(g).

This was made the occaſion of bringing David to court. The king was adviſed to divert himſelf with muſic; and it was contrived to recommend David to him for his ſkill on the harp(h). Saul accordingly ſent to Jeſſe, requeſting to have his ſon; which was immediately complied with: and David was kept at court, in the capacity of the king's armour-bearer(i).

Here the ſtory begins to grow confuſed, beyond *lay-ſkill* to reconcile. A war with the Philiſtines is abruptly introduced; in the midſt of the relation of which, we are as abruptly informed that David returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep(k) again; from whence his father ſent him with proviſions for his brothers, who were in the army(l). What can we think of this? Jeſſe hardly recalled his ſon from the honourable poſt of armour-bearer to the king! it is not likely that he was turned off, ſince we afterwards find him playing on the harp to the king as before(m); neither was it a proper employment for the king's armour-bearer to be feeding ſheep, when the army was in the field and his majeſty with them in perſon! Why—the moſt eaſy method, is to take it as we find it; to ſuppoſe it to be right, and go quietly on with the ſtory.

In the Philiſtine army was a man of extraordinary ſize, named Goliah; who came out of their camp, day by day, challenging and defying any one among the Hebrews to ſingle combat,

(a) 1 Sam. xxii. 18, 19. xxviii. 9.

(b) Saul is recorded to have affronted Samuel once before, by daring to ſacrifice without him, on a time when Samuel did not keep his appointment with him. See Ch. xiii. 8,—14.

(c) Ch. xv 26, 28. (d) Ver 33. (e) Sam. xvi. 13. (f) Ver. 14. (g) Joſephus. (h) Sam. xvi. 18. (i) Ver. 21. (k) Ch. xvii. 15. (l) Ver. 17. (m) Ch. xviii. 10.

combat, and to reſt the deciſion of their quarrel upon the event of the battle between them; an offer which no one among the Iſraelites had hitherto been found hardy enough to accept(a). David arrived at the army juſt as it was forming for engagement; at which time the giant advanced as before, with reproachful menaces—and after having enquired carefully concerning what reward would be given to the conqueror of this giant, and finding that great riches and the king's daughter would be the prize of conqueſt; David courageouſly declared before Saul, his acceptance of the challenge(b), notwithſtanding the contempt with which his offer was treated.

Saul, relying on the youth's ardour, and aſſurance of victory, girded his own armour on him; but David put it off again, truſting entirely to a pouch of ſtones, and his own ſkill in ſlinging(c). The ſucceſs anſwered his hopes, and ſtamped a raſh undertaking with a more reſpectable name; he knocked Goliah down with a ſtone; then ran in upon him, cut his head off with his own ſword, and brought it triumphantly to the king of Iſrael(d). The conſequence was the defeat of the Philiſtines.

Here we meet with another ſtumbling block. For, though Saul, as we have already obſerved, had ſent to Jeſſe expreſſly for his ſon David; though David had played to him on the harp, though Saul had again ſent to Jeſſe, to deſire that David might be permitted to ſtay with him; and in conſequence of this, had created him his armour-bearer; though he had now a freſh conference with him; had juſt put his own ſuit of armour on him: though all theſe occurrences muſt have happened within a ſmall ſpace of time, yet his memory is made to fail him ſo ſuddenly, that he knew nothing of David, or his parentage! but while David went to meet the Giant, he enquired of others who proved as ignorant as himſelf, whoſe ſon(e) the ſtripling was? This ſtumbling block we muſt likewiſe ſtep over, for it is not to be removed.

The reputation which this gallant action procured to David, ſoon gained him advancement in the army, and a warm friendſhip with Saul's ſon Jonathan(f). But the inordinate acclamations of the people, on account of the death of the Philiſtine Giant, *Saul hath ſlain his thouſands and David his ten thouſands*,(g) a rhodomontade beyond meaſure extravagant, when we compare the two ſubjects of the contraſt; juſtly occaſioned Saul to view David with a jealous eye. We have all the reaſon in the world to believe that Samuel and the prieſts made

(a) 1 Sam. xvii, 4. &c. (b) 1 Sam. xvii. 32. (c) Ver. 38, 40. (d) Ver. 49. (e) 1 Sam. xvii. 55. (f) Ch. xviii. 3 (g) 1. Sam. xviii. 7.

made every possible advantage of an adventure ſo fortunate for their ſecondary king, to improve his growing popularity; which even at its outſet had ſo far exceeded all bounds of decency: *What*, ſaid Saul, *can he have more but the kingdom?*(a) and we may therefore conclude that the king ſaw enough to alarm him; for we are told, that *Saul eyed David from that day and forward*(b). Thus we find that on the day following, while David played as uſual on his harp before Saul, the king caſt a javelin at him(c): which David avoided. Saul then made him captain over a thouſand; ſaying, *let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philiſtines be upon him*(d): He likewiſe made him the offer of his daughter Merab for his wife; but ſhe, we know not why, was given to another (e); afterwards Michal; and David's modesty(f) on this occaſion, was incomparably well acted; he knowing himſelf at the ſame time, to be ſecretly intended for the kingdom by Samuel.

Saul, upon reflexion, concluding it dangerous to execute any open act of violence againſt this young hero, cunningly hoped to enſnare him, by exalting him high in his favour; or to get rid of him by putting him upon his mettle, in performing feats of valour; for a deficiency of courage is not to be numbered among David's faults. It was with this view that the king, yet required of him, an hundred Philiſtine foreſkins(g), as the condition of becoming his son in law.

Had presents of value been required, a man of ability and generosity might with a very good grace have overpaid the demand; but where the lives of men, even though enemies, are concerned, a perſon actuated by the feelings of humanity, would have adhered but to the exact number required. David however, in this inſtance, gave the firſt proof of his delight in blood; by producing double the number aſked, *in full tale*(h)! It argues nothing to plead the different manners of mankind, in those early and leſs civilized ages of the world: for, if he was *then* the man after God's own heart; *God is unalterable*; and always required that we ſhould do juſtly, love mercy, and walk humbly with him.

David ſtill advanced in his military(i) reputation; and met with a powerful advocate in the perſon of Jonathan, his brother-in-law and faithful friend; who effected a temporary reconciliation between him and Saul(k); at which time Saul ſwore he would no more attempt his life. Nevertheleſs, whe-



(a) 1 Sam. xviii. 8. (b) Ver. 9. (c) Ver. 11. (d) Ver. 17. (e) Ver. 19. (f) Ver. 23. (g) Ver. 25. According to Joſephus, 600 heads. (h) Ver. 27. (i) Ver. 30. Ch. xix. 8. (k) 1 Sam. xix. 4.

ther it was that he could not get the better of his jealouſy; or whether it was that he ſtill diſcovered David intriguing with the prieſts, we know not; conſequences incline us to the latter conjecture. Saul made two more attempts to kill him(a); from one of which he was protected by his wife Michal; and finding it not ſafe to ſtay at court, he fled to Samuel in Ramah(b). Hither Saul ſent meſſengers to apprehend him(c); but theſe it ſeems, ſeeing Samuel preſiding over a company of prophets and propheſying, were ſeized with the ſpirit of propheſying alſo; and not only ſo, but it is related that Saul finding this, went at laſt himſelf, to juſt the ſame purpoſe; for he likewiſe propheſied(d) ſtripping himſelf naked, in which condition he continued for a day and a night.

This is an extremely odd relation! Had not the hiſtorian added the particulars concerning Saul; it might with great plauſibility be ſuppoſed that David and the prophets had corrupted and bought off theſe emiſſaries which were ſent after him; but when the king is ſaid to have propheſied, and his propheſying to have been attended with ſuch extravagant circumſtances, as ſtripping himſelf, and lying in that condition for a day and a night! we in this caſe have no other mode of conception, but the ſuppoſition that the prophets knew how to inſpire theſe bigoted people with occaſional fits of enthuſiaſtic frenzy! ſuch fits, and ſuch only, being able to produce extravagancies of this nature. Profane hiſtory, both antient and modern, will ſuggeſt inſtances which will render this ſuppoſition probable. Had the ſubject of Saul's propheſying been tranſmitted down to us, it might have greatly illuſtrated this paſſage in the hiſtory; but no, he is barely ſaid to have *propheſied*; which is a vague term, ſignifying ſometimes a prediction of future events, and at others merely a delivery of pious orations, otherwiſe underſtood by the word *preaching*. But the ſpirit of God is *introduced* on all theſe occaſions; this is ſaid to have been upon Saul; and this is ſufficient to ſtop all impertinent inquiſitive folks; thus, after much ado about nothing, we leave it——juſt as we found it.

Afterwards David had a private interview(e) with Jonathan, being afraid to appear at court. At this meeting, Jonathan, who had conceived too great an affection for this man, and was at length ſeduced by him from the duty and allegiance which he owed to his father and king, ſolemnly vowed(f) that he would ſound his father's intentions the next day, on which, being

(a) 1 Sam. xix 10, 11. (b) Ver. 18. (c) Ver. 20. (d) Ver, 23. (e) 1 Sam. xx. 1. (f) Ver. 12.

being the feſtival of the new moon, David's attendance was expected at the king's table; and that he would warn him of any danger intended him. David lay hid in a field until Jonathan brought him the required intelligence; and when the king aſked after him, Jonathan, as had been before concerted, ſaid that he had requeſted leave to go and perform a family ſacrifice at Beth-lehem. Saul's reply on this occaſion is very pertinent, and ſhews that his antipathy to David was not the cauſeleſs inveteracy of a diſordered mind. "*Then Saul's anger was kindled againſt Jonathan, and he ſaid unto him, Thou ſon of the perſerve rebellious woman, do not I know that thou haſt choſen the ſon of Jeſſe to thine own confuſion, and unto the confuſion of thy mother's nakedneſs? For as long as the ſon of Jeſſe liveth upon the ground, thou ſhalt not be eſtabliſhed, nor thy kingdom: wherefore now ſend and fetch him unto me, for he ſhall ſurely die.*"(a) Jonathan expoſtulated with his father, and had a javelin hurled at him for his pains(b).

David being made acquainted, according to agreement, with the king's diſpoſition towards him, retired to Abimelech the high prieſt, at the city of Nob(c); who treated him with ſhew-bread, and armed him with the ſword of Goliah; which had been hung up and conſecrated to God(d).

We may conſider David's reſuming this ſword, after its dedication as a religious trophy, to be a manifeſtation of hoſtile intentions, or a declaration of war againſt Saul; for which he now took the firſt opportunity to prepare. Thus accoutred, he fled out of Judea, to Achiſh, king of Gath(e): intending, as we have good reaſon to believe, to enter into a treaty of alliance with him againſt the Hebrews; but the popular cry was againſt him before he accompliſhed any thing; or at leaſt any thing that has reached our times. Here David appears to diſadvantage; for though his carrying with him the ſword of Goliah, was artful enough; ſince it was a continual witneſs of that proweſs, which had gained him ſuch extraordinary reputation; yet for him upon this occaſion to throw himſelf into the power of the Philiſtines, from whoſe champion he had raviſhed *that ſword*; was the highest imprudence; and we perceive he had like to have ſuffered for it; had he not made uſe of a ſtratagem to procure his releaſe, which he effected by acting the madman(f). *Mankind ſeems to have been very eaſily impoſed on in thoſe days!*

David thinking it now time to avow his deſign of diſputing the crown with Saul openly, went to a cave called Adullam;

(a) 1 Sam. xx. 30. 31. (b) Ver. 33. (c) 1 Sam. xxi 5. (d) Ver. 9. Joſephus. (e) Ver. 10. (f) Ver. 13.

Adullam; which he appointed the place of rendezvous for his partiſans. Here we are told he collected together a company of debtors, vagrants, and diſaffected perſons; to the number of four hundred; and opened his rebellion by heading this parcel of banditti(a). Hither alſo came to him his father and all his brethren; and the firſt movement that he made, was to go to the king of Moab, to deſire a retreat for his father and mother, until he knew the event of his enterprize(b).

By the advice of the prophet Gad, David next marched into the land of Judah(c). Gad, no doubt hoped that as the young adventurer was of that tribe, he would there meet with conſiderable reinforcement. When Saul heard of this inſurrection, he pathetically laments his misfortune to thoſe about him; that they, and even his ſon Jonathan, ſhould conſpire againſt him(d). Then ſtarted up one Doeg, an Edomite, who informed Saul, that he had ſeen David harboured by the prieſts in Nob(e). Upon this, Saul ſummoned all thoſe belonging to that city, before him, with Abimelech their chief; who began to excuſe himſelf as well as he could; but Saul remembering, without doubt, the threatening of Samuel, concerning the affair of king Agag(f); and conſidering theſe prieſts as the traitors whom he ſought, he commanded them all to be ſlain, to the number of eighty-five perſons(g). Moreover, agreeable to the barbarity of that people, the maſſacre included the whole city of Nob, man and beaſt, young and old, without exception(h).

Though the king's rage in this inſtance exceeded not only the bounds of humanity, but alſo of good policy; it nevertheleſs ſerves to ſhew how deeply the prieſts were concerned in the rebellion of David; and ſhews alſo that Saul had not ſo great an opinion of their holineſs, as we at this diſtance of time, from their own annals, might be led to entertain. Had Saul been more tractable, he might have enjoyed the name of king, have continued the dupe of the prieſts, have died in peace; and his children have ſucceeded quietly to the ſame inheritance after him. But,

*Ye Gods! what havock does ambition make.*
*Among your works!*——

During this time David rescued the city of Keilah from the Philiſtines(i), who were beſieging it, hoping to make it a garriſon for himſelf. But upon the approach of Saul, not thinking himſelf able to maintain it, being as yet but ſix hundred ſtrong; and not chuſing to confide in the inhabitants,

(a) 1 Sam. xxii. 2. (b) Ver. 3. (c) Ver. 5. (d) Ver. 7. 8. (e) Ver. 9. (f) 1 Sam. xv. (g) Ch. xxii. 16. 17. 18. (h) Ver. 19. (i) 1 Sam. xxiii. 3.

tants, he abandoned it, and retired to the wilderneſs(a). Hither Jonathan came privately to ſee him, and piouſly engages in the cauſe againſt his own father, by covenant; in which it was agreed, that if David ſucceeded, of which Jonathan is very confident, *he* was to be a partaker(b) of his good fortune; but as Jonathan was not to join him openly, he went home again.

Saul having received intelligence of David's retreats, purſued him from place to place; but was called off by news of an invaſion of the land by the Philiſtines(c); whether of David's procuring or not, we are uncertain. After repelling the invaders, he however returned to the wilderneſs of En-gedi, in purſuit of David; with three thouſand choſen men. Here we are told of an odd adventure which put the life of Saul ſtrangely into the power of David. He turned in to repoſe himſelf alone, in a cave, wherein at that very time David and his myrmidons were ſecreted(d). This one would imagine to have been a fine opportunity for him to have given a finiſhing ſtroke to his fortune, by killing Saul, and jumping into the throne at once. But David knew better what he was about, than to act ſo raſhly. He could entertain no hopes that the Jews would receive for their king, a man who ſhould imbrue his hands in the blood of the Lord's anointed. He therefore only privately cut off the ſkirt of Saul's robe(e); and ſuffered him to depart in peace. When the king was gone out from the cave, David calls after him, and artfully makes a merit of his forbearance, proteſting an innocency, to which his being in arms was, however, a flat(f) contradiction. Saul freely and gratefully acknowledges himſelf indebted to him for his life, and ſeems ſo well convinced of David's ſtrength, and his own weakneſs, that he candidly confeſſes it; only tying him down by oath(g), not to deſtroy his children after him. An obligation which, in due time, we ſhall ſee how well David remembered and fulfilled.

Saul muſt certainly have ſtrayed very far from his men, to have let David catch him at ſo great a diſadvantage; a conduct not uſual with good generals. That ſuch muſt have been the caſe, is however, evident, while we credit the relation; ſince the meanneſs of Saul's reply to David's harangue, can be no otherwiſe accounted for. Saul does not appear to have wanted reſolution on other occaſions; but to acknowledge his aſſurance that David would obtain the ſovereignty; and

(a) 1 Sam. xxiii. 13. (b) Ver. 16. 17. 18. (c) Ver. 27. (d) 1 Sam. xxiv. 3. (e) Ver. 4. (f) Ver. 8. 15. (g) Ver. 21.

and poorly to entreat a fugitive rebel in behalf of his family! is a conduct not even to be palliated, but upon the foregoing ſuppoſition. We muſt either condemn the general or the king; neither of which characters appear with extraordinary luſtre upon this occaſion. David on the other hand diſſembles admirably here; pretending to Saul, a *great reverence* for the Lord's anointed; though conſcious at the ſame time that *he was alſo* the Lord's anointed; and anointed purpoſely to ſuperſede the other Lord's anointed; and moreover, was at this very time aiming to put his election in force! But—— as the people were not of his council; and he knew their great regard for religious ſanctions, it was certainly prudent in him, to ſet an example of piety, in an inſtance, of which he hoped, in time to reap the benefit himſelf. About this time Samuel died(a).

We next find our young adventurer acting the chief character in a tragi-comedy, which will farther diſplay his title to the appellation of being the man after God's own heart.

There dwelt then at Maon, a blunt rich old farmer, whoſe name was Nabal. David hearing of him, and that he was at that time ſheep-ſhearing; ſent ten of his followers to levy a contribution upon him(b); making a merit of his forbearance in that he had not ſtolen his ſheep, and murdered his ſhepherds(c). Nabal, who, to be ſure, was not the moſt courteous man in the world; upon receiving this extraordinary meſſage, gave them but a ſo-ſo anſwer, attended with a flat denial. *Who*, ſays he, *is David? and who is the ſon of Jeſſe? there be many ſervants now-a-days that break away every man from his maſter. Shall I then take my bread and my water, and my fleſh that I have killed for my ſhearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?* (d) Upon receiving this anſwer, David directly formed his reſolution; and arming himſelf with a number of his followers, vowed to butcher him and all that belonged to him, before the next morning(e). And how was this pious intention diverted? Why, Abigail, the charming Abigail, Nabal's wife, reſolved, unknown to her ſpouſe, to try the force of beauty in mollifying our angry hero; whoſe diſpoſition for gallantry and warm regard for the fair ſex, was, probably, not unknown at that time. Accordingly, ſhe prepares a preſent, and goes to David, ſaying very ſententiouſly—*upon me, my Lord, upon me let this iniquity be*:(f)—judging very humanely, that could ſhe get him to transfer his revenge upon *her*, ſhe might poſſibly contrive to pacify him, without

(a) 1 Sam. xxv. 1. (b) Ver. 5, 9. (c) Ver. 7. (d) Ver. 10. 11. (e) Ver. 13, 34. (f) Ver. 24.

without proceeding to diſagreeable extremities. Nor was ſhe wrong in her judgment; for we are told —— *So David received of her hand that which ſhe had brought him, and ſaid unto her, go up in peace to thine houſe; ſee I have hearkened to thy voice,* AND HAVE ACCEPTED THY PERSON(a). But whatever pleaſure Abigail might have had, we do not find that Nabal was ſo well pleaſed with the compoſition his wife had made for him; for when he came to underſtand ſo much of the ſtory as ſhe choſe to inform him of; he gueſſed the remainder, broke his heart, and died in ten days afterwards(b). David loſes no time, but returns God thanks for the old fellow's death, and then marries the buxom widow(c); together with one Ahinoam, a Jezreelite. For Saul had diſpoſed of his daughter Michal to another(d).

We are now told another ſtory ſtrongly resembling that of the cave at En-gedi. Saul again purſued David with three thouſand choſen men; again fell into his hands during his ſleep; only that here David ſtole upon him in his own camp; he ran away with the king's ſpear and bottle of water; and Saul went back again as wiſe as he came(e).

I own that I ſubſcribe to the opinion of Monſ. Bayle, who looks upon this but as another detail of the adventure at En-gedi; and that, for much the ſame reaſons. For, upon a compariſon of both, as laid down in the 23d, 24th, and 26th chapters of 1 Samuel, we may remark.

I. That in each ſtory, the Ziphites give Saul intelligence, of the place where David harboured.

II. That in each ſtory, David comes upon Saul in much the ſame manner, with-holds his people from killing him, and contents himſelf with taking away a teſtimonial of the king's having been in his power.

III. That in the ſecond account, when David is pleading the injuſtice of Saul's perſecuting him, as he terms it; he does not repreſent to him that this was the *ſecond time* of his ſparing him, when he had his life ſo entirely in his power! and that Saul's purſuing him this ſecond time, was a flagrant inſtance of ingratitude after what had happened on the former occaſion.

IV. That in the ſecond relation, Saul, when he acknowledges David's forbearance and mercy to him in the preſent inſtance, makes no mention of any *former obligation* of this kind; although it was ſo recent.

V. That the hiſtorian, who evidently intends to blacken the

(a) 1 Sam. xxv. 35. (b) Ver. 37. 38. (c) Ver. 39. (d) Ver. 44. (e) 1 Sam. xxvi.

the character of Saul, and whiten that of David; does not make the leaſt obſervation himſelf, in the ſecond narrative, of reference to the firſt.

Theſe reaſons prove unanſwerably that we are furniſhed with two relations of the ſame adventure. To account for this double record, and their variations, muſt be left to commentators, connectors, and harmonizers, who are uſed to compromiſe affairs of this nature.

David finding, that with his preſent ſtrength, he was not able to maintain any footing in Judea; puts himſelf once more under the protection of Achiſh, king of Gath(a). Achiſh, who does not appear to have been a very powerful prince, ſeems to conſider David alone, and David at the head of ſix hundred deſperadoes, as two very different perſons; for he now aſſigns him a place named Ziklag, for a habitation, where he remained a year and four months(b).

As he had now a quiet reſidence, a perſon who entertains a great opinion of David's ſanctity, would be apt to ſuppoſe he would now confine himſelf to agriculture, compoſing pſalms, and ſinging them to his harp; but David found employment more ſuitable to his genius. I ſhould be very ſorry to be underſtood to inſinuate, that he did not ſing pſalms, at leiſure times; but his more important buſineſs was to lead his men out to plunder the adjacent country. We have the names of ſome nations as they are called, but which muſt have been ſmall diſtinct communities, like the preſent camps of wandering Aſiatics, among whom he carried his depredations; theſe are the Geſhurites, the Gezrites, and the Amalekites(c). Of theſe people he made a total maſſacre, at thoſe places where he made his inroads! *ſaying, leſt they ſhould tell of us, ſaying, ſo did David, and ſo will be his manner, all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philiſtines*(d.) After thus prudently endeavouring to ſecure his robberies from detection, he brings his booty home, which conſiſted of *all*, which thoſe miſerable victims poſſeſſed(e). He made preſents of this, to his benefactor king Achiſh(f); who, demanding where he had made his incurſion? was anſwered, againſt the ſouth of Judah, &c.(g) intending by this falſity to inſinuate to the king, his averſion to his own country-men, and attachment to him. *And Achiſh believed David, ſaying, he hath made his people Iſrael utterly to abhor him; therefore he ſhall be my ſervant for ever*(h).

The Philiſtines at this time collected their forces to attack the

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1 Sam. xxvii. 1. 2. 3. (b) Ver. 6. 7. (c) Ver. 8. (d) Ver. 9. 11. (e) We doubt not but David compoſed a pſalm upon this occaſion. (f) Joſephus. (g) 1 Sam. xxvii. 10. (h) Ver. 12.

the Jews. For which purpoſe Achiſh ſummoned David,(a) and met with cheerful compliance; *ſurely*, ſays David, *thou ſhalt know what thy ſervant can do*(b). He accordingly marched his adherents, with the troops of king Achiſh: but when the princes of the Philiſtines ſaw a company of Hebrews in their army, they were much ſurpriſed, and queſtioned Achiſh concerning them. The account which Achiſh gave of them, did not ſatisfy the princes, who juſtly feared he might prove a dangerous auxiliary. *Make this fellow return*, ſaid they, *that he may go again to the place which thou haſt appointed him, and let him not go down with us to the battle, leſt in the battle he be an adverſary to us: for wherewith ſhould he reconcile himſelf to his maſter? ſhould it not be with the heads of theſe men?*(c) David was accordingly diſmiſſed, very much mortified at their diſtruſt of him(d).

Upon his return to Ziklag, he found, that during his abſence, the Amalekites had made repriſals upon him; had burned Ziklag; and had carried off all the women captives(e). But in the relation, there is one remark well worth noting, which is, that *they ſlew not any, either great or ſmall*(f)—ſo much more moderation had theſe poor heathens in their juſt revenge, than the enlightened David in his unprovoked inſult. Upon this misfortune, his band began to mutiny; and were upon the point of ſtoning(g) him; when he, who knew their weak ſide, inquired of the Lord What he ſhould do? and evaded their rage, by inſpiring them with a reſolution to purſue the Amalekites, and with the hopes of recovering all their loſſes. He, therefore, with four hundred picked men, ſet out on the purſuit; by the way they found a ſtraggler(h) who had fainted; and, after recovering him, gained by his means, intelligence of their rout. David came upon them unexpectedly, at a place where they were, without apprehenſion, making themſelves merry upon their ſucceſs: and though David's men recovered all they had loſt, together with other booty: and found their wives and children unhurt; yet could not their captain reſiſt ſo inviting an opportunity of gratifying his cruel diſpoſition: the purſuit and ſlaughter continued from the twilight (we know not whether of the morning or the evening) of one day, until the evening of the next. None eſcaping but a party which rode upon camels(i).

Of the ſpoil taken from theſe people, David ſent preſents to the elders of his own tribe of Judah; *and to all the places where David himſelf and his men were wont to haunt*(k). By which means he kept them hearty in his intereſt.



(a) 1 Sam. xxviii 1. (b) Ver. 2. (c) 1 Sam. xxix 4. (d) Ver. 8. 11. (e) Ch. xxx. 1. (f) Ver. 2. (g) Ver. 6. (h) Ver. 11. (i) Ver. 17. (k) Ver. 31.

The diſpute between the Philiſtine and Jewiſh armies, did not terminate but by the defeat of the latter, the death of Saul, and of three of his ſons(a).

Such was the cataſtrophe of king Saul! a man advanced from the humble ſtate of a ſhepherd, by the prophet Samuel, to be his deputy in the government of the Jewiſh nation, under the ſpecious name of king: a man, who, allowing for the *peculiar complexion* of the people over whom he was placed; does not, on the whole, ſeem to ſuffer by compariſon with any other king in the ſame hiſtory; and whoſe character does not appear to be ſtained with by conſpicuous fault, except that he was one degree leſs cruel than his haughty patron: and was diſobedient enough to endeavour to be in effect, what he was only intended to be in name.

We ſhall now have an opportunity of obſerving the conduct of our hero in a regal capacity. The death of Saul facilitated his advancement to the ſovereignty, to which he had no pretenſion, either by the right of inheritance; which was claimed by Iſh-boſheth, a remaining ſon of Saul; or by popular election, which Saul himſelf had the ſhew of: but by the clandeſtine appointment of an old Levite; which inſpired him with hopes, that by arms and intrigue, he at length realized.

David had returned to Ziklag but two days, when on the third, there came to him an Amalekite, who officiouſly informed him of the event of the battle between the Jews and Philiſtines, owning himſelf to be the perſon who killed Saul; hoping to be well rewarded for his news, by David; whoſe ambition was ſo well known, that he preſented him with Saul's crown and bracelet(b). But alas, he knew not David, and periſhed in the experiment: David ordering him to be killed for daring to ſlay the Lord's anointed(c). Who can help ſmiling at the relation of David's tearing the cloaths off his back, and burſting out into a ſorrowful lamentation for the death of a man, to whoſe deſtruction he had but juſt before ſo freely offered to lend aſſiſtance?

Upon this alteration of affairs, David aſking council of the Lord, was adviſed to leave Ziklag, and go to Hebron, one of the cities of Judah; whither he and all his men repaired(d). There he got his Partiſans to anoint him king over Judah; (not claiming, it appears, in right of the ſacred unction beſtowed on him by Samuel;) at the ſame time that Abner, Saul's general, had, at Mahanaim, made Iſh-boſheth, Saul's ſon, king over all Iſrael(e). Upon this diviſion of the kingdom, a battle

(a) 1 Sam xxxi. (b) 2 Sam. i. 10. (c) Ver. 15. (d) 2 Sam. ii. 1. (e) Ver. 4. 8.

tle was fought at the pool of Gideon, on the part of Iſh-boſheth, commanded by general Abner; and on the part of David, by general Joab: victory declared in favour of David; with ſmall loſs on either ſide, except that Joab loſt his brother Aſahel, who was killed by Abner's own hand(a).

We muſt here be content with general hints; being only informed that *there was a long war between the houſe of Saul, and the houſe of David: but David waxed ſtronger and ſtronger, and the houſe of Saul waxed weaker and weaker*(b). What very much conduced to this, was an ill-timed quarrel between king Iſh-boſheth and general Abner; concerning one of Saul's concubines, with whom Abner had been too familiar(c): and his reſentment of the notice taken of this, occaſioned a treaty to be negotiated between him and David, whom Abner engaged to eſtabliſh over all Iſrael(d). David accepted his offer, but demanded as a preliminary, the reſtoration of his firſt wife Michal; who, during the diſputes between him and Saul, had been eſpouſed to another(e). This demand he likewiſe made openly, by an expreſs meſſage to Iſh-boſheth; who kindly complied with it: the poor man who had married her, following her weeping all the way(f).

One cannot help noting David's amorous diſpoſition here: which could not be content with ſix wives, who bore him children,(g) (no mention of thoſe who did not) but was yet ſo warm, that even in his moſt important concerns, carnality muſt be a previous conſideration.

After Abner had traiterouſly endeavoured to advance the intereſt of David(h); he had an interview with him(i); which, quickly after he was departed, came to the ears of Joab; who, unknown to David, ſends for him back again, and privately ſtabs him, in revenge for the loſs of his brother Aſahel(k). This was a baſe piece of treachery, worthy the ſervant of ſuch a maſter; to aſſaſſinate a man in cool blood, in revenge for an action committed in the heat of battle; in ſelf-defence; and after fair warning given.

Upon the murder of Abner, David again acts the mourner(l); which has a greater probability of being ſincere now, than when he grieved for the unhappy Saul; becauſe the falſe Abner was preparing to do him eſſential ſervice, by betraying his maſter's cauſe. But the event proved fully as advantageous to David; as will preſently appear.

When Iſh-boſheth and his friends heard of the fate of Abner, who had been the very life of their cauſe; they were much

(a) 2 Sam. ii. 17. 23. (b) 2 Sam. iii. 1. (c) Ver. 7. (d) Ver. 12. (e) Ver. 13. (f) Ver. 15. 16. (g) 2 Sam. iii. 2, &c. (h) Ver. 17. (i) Ver. 20. (k) Ver. 27. (l) Ver. 31, &c.

much dejected; and two villains, named Rechab and Baanah, hoping to make their fortunes by the public calamity, went and murdered their maſter king Iſh-boſheth, as he was repoſing himſelf during the heat of the day; and brought his head to David(a). But not reflecting on an obvious maxim in politics; they, like the Amalekite before, who claimed the merit of killing Saul; ſoon found that he thought it adviſeable to puniſh the traitors, whatever he thought of the treaſon(b).

Had David poſſeſſed the leaſt ſpark of genuine grace, he would have been aſhamed to act the part he did, relating to the death of Iſh-boſheth. He would have been aſhamed to act the hypocrite ſo openly, in ſeeming ſorry for an event, which removed the only formidable obſtacle to his ambitious views. He would have been aſhamed to puniſh the immediate inſtruments in perpetrating a crime, of which he, the uſurper of part of the unfortunate king's dominions, and a pretender to the whole, was the remote, though efficient cauſe. Since had David aſpired to no other ſceptre than his ſhepherd's crook, and had not the villains preſumed on the uſurper's gratitude, Iſh-boſheth, who was a quiet prince, might have reigned long an honour to himſelf and his country.

Iſh-boſheth does not appear to have been a man of parts, qualified to contend with ſuch an antagoniſt as David: for nothing is recorded of him; Abner was the perſon who ſet him up; and had he lived, would as eaſily have ſet him down. And though no qualifications are a ſecurity againſt aſſaſſination, yet, as in the caſe of another unfortunate monarch, Darius, king of Perſia, ſuch cowardly wretches generally take the advantage of precipitating misfortunes already commenced, that they may pay their court to the riſing ſun.

The murder of this unhappy ſon of an unhappy father, advanced David to the dignity to which he aſpired,(c) (though we ſhall ſee in a paſſage which reflects no great honour to him, that Saul had more ſons yet living). He was now in his thirty-eighth year; having reigned ſeven years and an half in Hebron(d) over the tribe of Judah.

Although David obtained the government, yet could not his enterprizing genius continue ſatisfied with ſuch an exaltation. The firſt object of his attention now, was the city of Jeruſalem, then inhabited by the Jebuſites; (but it was of no importance whoſe property it was, if David conceived a deſire for it) this city he beſieged(e); and the inhabitants relying

(a) 2 Sam. iv. 5, &c. (b) 2 Sam. iii. 12. (c) 2 Sam. v. 3. 1 Chron. xi. 3. (d) 2 Sam. ii. 11. Ch. v. 5. (e) Ver. 6.

lying on the ſtrength of their fortifications, out of deriſion planted cripples on their ramparts to guard their walls; ſaying, *except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou ſhalt not come in hither* (a). Nevertheleſs David carried the place, and made it his chief city (b).

*N. B.* He took more wives and concubines out of Jeruſalem, his new acquiſition (c).

While he was thus amorouſly engaged, the Philiſtines hearing that he was made king over all Iſrael, came and diſturbed him: but David according to the uſual term *ſmote them* (d); and his ſtrokes were always ſufficiently bloody.

I ſhall not dwell upon the comic tale of David's bringing home the Ark; it was brought on a new cart drawn by oxen; and Uzzah was ſmote *by the Lord*, as the hiſtorian aſſerts, for his impiety in ſaving the ark from being overturned (e). On this account it was no longer truſted to profane hands, but carried the remainder of the way upon the more holy ſhoulders of the Levites (f), with great parade, attended by muſicians, and by David himſelf, who, dreſſed in a linen ephod, *danced before the Lord with all his might* (g): and this, in ſuch a frantic indecent manner, that he expoſed his nakedneſs to the bye-ſtanders. Wherefore his wife Michal ſneered at him. *How* GLORIOUS *was the king of Iſrael to-day, who uncovered himſelf to-day in the eyes of the handmaids of his ſervants, as one of the vain fellows* SHAMELESSLY *uncovereth himſelf* (h). David, it ſeems, was of a different opinion, for he told her he *would* play before the Lord; and would be yet *more vile* than ſhe had repreſented him; adding—*and of the maid-ſervants which thou haſt ſpoken of, of them ſhall I be had in honour* (i). I would adviſe ſome ſtaunch zealot to take this part of David's anſwer, for his text; ſpiritualize it, and give the myſtical ſenſe of it; leſt the profane, who are content with the evident ſignification of words, ſhould conſtrue it no otherwiſe than into a compliment on the proportion of his parts: intimating that he had no cauſe to be aſhamed of what he expoſed.

This ſtory is concluded with a remark, as ſtriking as the reſt of it.——THEREFORE, *Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child until the day of her death* (k).

After this, David ſmote the Philiſtines, not ſparing even Gath, that city which had ſo humanely protected him (l). He then ſmote the Moabites, putting to the ſword two thirds of the nation, by cauſing them to lie proſtrate on the ground, and

(a) 2 Sam. v. 6. (b) Ch. v. 7. 9. 1 Chron. xi. 5. 7. (c) 2 Sam. v. 13. (d) Ver. 20. 25. 1 Chron xiv. 11. (e) 2 Sam. vi. 7. (f) 1 Chron. xv. 2. 15. (g) 2 Sam. vi. 14. (h) Ver. 20. (i) Ver. 22. (k) Ver. 23. (l) Ch. viii. 1. 1 Chron. xviii. 1.

and meaſuring them by lines; *even with two lines meaſured he to put to death; and with one full line to keep alive*(a): ſo ſyſtematic was his wrath! Hadadezer, king of Zobah, was the next whom he ſmote; who being aſſiſted by the Syrians of Damaſcus, he next ſmote them(b). Yet all this ſmiting and ſlaying, is ſo obſcurely mentioned, that we know nothing of the offences committed againſt this mighty chief, to excite ſuch blood-thirſty indignation. Indeed the cauſe is, without much difficulty, deducible from the produce of theſe wars, which ſufficiently indicate the nature of David's *thirſt*. Great quantities of gold, ſilver, and braſs, are ſaid to have been brought to Jeruſalem(c); and the prieſts may with reaſon be ſuppoſed to be the inſtigators to theſe wars; ſince we find all the plunder ſurrendered to them(d). We have therefore no cauſe to wonder at the exalted praiſes they have beſtowed upon him. He is ſaid to have *gat him a name, when he returned from ſmiting the Syrians*(e)—this may very eaſily be credited; but it is to be feared that, were the name he gat from the Jews, and that he gat from the Syrians, compared; they would not accord extremely well together.

David was at this time ſeized with a *temporary* fit of gratitude; towards a lame ſon of his old friend Jonathan, named Mephiboſheth: to whom he reſtored all the private patrimony of his grandfather Saul; and took him into his family(f). But this was not laſting; for upon an accuſation preferred againſt him by his ſervant, David readily beſtowed all Mephiboſheth's poſſeſſions upon that ſervant(g); yet——when the accuſation was found to be falſe; inſtead of equitably puniſhing the aſperſer of innocence, and re-inſtating Mephiboſheth in his former favour; he reſtored to him but half the forfeiture for his ſuppoſed guilt(h): leaving the villain Ziba in the quiet poſſeſſion of the other half, as the reward of his treachery.

The next memorable act recorded of David, is the only acknowledged crime that he ever committed: all his other tranſactions being reputed *right in the eyes of the Lord* (i).

In the midſt of an obſcure detail of ſmiting and ſlaying; in revenge of the contemptuous treatment of ſome ambaſſadors, ſent by him with compliments of condolence: but who were conſidered as ſpies: while Joab was with the army proſecuting the ſiege of Rabbah, a chief city of the Ammonites: David

(a) 2 Sam. Ch. viii. 2. (b) Ver. 3. 5. 2 Chron. xviii. 3. 5. (c) 2 Sam. viii. 7. 8. 10 1 Chron. xviii. 2. 4. 6. 8. 10. (d) 2 Sam. viii. 11. 1 Chron. xviii. 11. (e) 2 Sam. viii. 13. (f) 2 Sam. ix. 1, &c. (g) Ch. xvi. 4. (h) Ch. xix. 29. (i) 1 Kings xv. 5. compared with 1 Chron, xxi. 1.

David, then at Jeruſalem, walking one evening on the roof of his palace, perceived, from that eminence, a handſome woman bathing herſelf(a). Fired with the ſight, he ſent to inquire who ſhe was? and underſtanding ſhe was Bath-ſheba, wife of Uriah, who was at that time opportunely abſent in the army under general Joab; he cauſed her to be brought to him directly, (no ceremony in the caſe) and after gratifying his inclination, ſent her home again(b). Some time after, the woman finding herſelf with child, naturally informed the king of it. He, never at a loſs for ways and means, immediately ordered Uriah home(c); of whom he inquired news concerning the operations of the campaign: and then diſmiſſed him to his own houſe; ſending after him a preſent of victuals(d). David intended the good man a little relaxation from the fatigues of war, that he might kiſs his wife, and be cheated into a child more than he had a natural right to: but whether Uriah had received any intimation of the honour his majeſty had done him; or whether he honeſtly meant the ſelf-denial he profeſſed—we are not told; however, Uriah would not go home, but ſlept in the guard-room, with the king's ſervants(e). David took care to be informed of this, and queſtioned Uriah concerning the reaſon of it. Uriah urged a ſcruple of conſcience againſt going to enjoy any indulgence at home, while the ark, Joab, and the army, remained in tents in the open field(f). He was detained another night; and David made him him drunk, waiting to ſee what effect that might have. It was ſtill the ſame; Uriah would not go home. David finding him ſo untractable, altered his plan of operations, and determined then to get rid of him for ever. To which intent, he ſent him back to the camp, with a letter to the general. *And he wrote in the letter, ſaying, ſet ye Uriah in the fore-front of the hotteſt battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be ſmitten and die*(g). This was accordingly complied with(h); and then Bath-ſheba, like Abigail before, was taken into David's ſeraglio(i).

Nathan the prophet, read David an arch lecture upon this ſubject(k); and he, who took care not to diſagree with his beſt friends, bore with the reproof, and humbled himſelf accordingly.

It is hoped the ſuppoſition may be allowed, that the noiſe this righteous affair made, might be one motive for Joab's deſiring David to come and partake ſome of the honours of the

(a) 2 Sam. xi. 2. (b) Ver. 4. (c) Ver. 6. (d) Ver. 8. (e) Ver. 9. [f] Ver. 11. [g] Ver. 15. [h] Ver. 17. [i] Ver. 27. [k] Ch. xii. 1.

the campaign(a): an opportunity which he prudently laid hold of; but fatal was his preſence wherever he appeared.

How ſhall a perſon ſubject to the ſenſations of humanity, (a ſecurity of more avail among men, than the moſt binding laws) how ſhall a man not ſteeled to a very Jew, find expreſſions ſuited to the occaſion, when he relates the treatment of this poor city Rabbah? The ſtudy would be as difficult as unneceſſary; the ſimple unexaggerated tale, if ſeriouſly attended to, will ſhock the humane reader ſufficiently. The city of Rabbah was taken and plundered; and David *brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under ſaws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them paſs through the brick-kiln*(b): *and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon*(c). The preciſe puniſhments here alluded to, are not underſtood at this time; writers being much divided in their expoſitions of theſe words; but that extraordinary puniſhments are meant, cannot admit of a doubt; for Joſephus writes that *the men were put to death by exquiſite torments*. And is it *thus* the people of God, headed by a man peculiarly ſtiled the man after God's own heart, uſed priſoners of war?

It would not be eaſy to ſelect any period of any hiſtory more bloody; or abounding more in wickedneſs of various dyes than that which is the object of the reader's preſent attention. Inſtances ſucceed ſo quick, that the relation of one is ſcarcely concluded, before freſh ones obtrude upon notice.

Amnon, one of our hero's ſons, raviſhed his ſiſter Tamar, and then turned her out of doors(d). Abſalom, her brother by the ſame mother, ſeemingly took no notice of it, until *two years after*; when he invited all his brothers to a feaſt at his ſheep-ſhearing; where he made Amnon drunk, and murdered him(e): ſo deliberate, and yet ſo determined was his revenge! Abſalom, on this account, fled out of Judea, for three years(f); until, at the intreaty of Joab, he was invited home again, by his father, whoſe favorite he was(g). But though he returned to Jeruſalem, yet would not his father ſee him for two years(h) more.

Abſalom, during his exile, conceived a deſign of depoſing his father; for after their reconciliation, his firſt attention was to render himſelf popular. To this end he ſet up a ſplendid

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(a) 2 Sam. xii. 27. 28. (b) It is ſuppoſed that the antient ſlavery of the Jews to the Egyptians, and the labour they were employed in by their lordly taſk-maſters, the making bricks; might be a current reproachful jeer upon the Jews, when any quarrel happened between them and their neighbours: and that the making their priſoners paſs through the brick-kiln, was a cruel method of revenging ſuch affronts. A conjecture not improbable. (c) 2 Sam. xii. 31. 1 Chron. xx. 3. (d) 2 Sam. xiii. 14. (e) Ver. 28. (f) Ver 38. [g] Ch. xiv. 21. 24. [h] Ver. 28.

ſplendid equipage(a): but politician-like increaſed his affability with his magnificence: riſing up early, and planting himſelf in the way, to ſalute all who came to his father's levee. Of theſe he kindly inquired their buſineſs, or grievances; throwing out hints of the king's remiſſneſs in the execution of juſtice; and how uprightly *he* would conduct himſelf, were their cauſes to be determined by *him* (b). Piety is univerſally, and was in particular, among this people, the ſafeſt diſguiſe for roguery. When Abſalom, therefore, thought his ſcheme ſufficiently ripe for execution, he deſired leave of his father to go to Hebron, to perform a vow made by him while a refugee in Syria(c). At Hebron he ſet up his ſtandard, and his followers aſſembled in ſuch numbers, and the diſaffection was ſo general, that David thought it prudent to retire from Jeruſalem(d).

With him he took all his family and dependents, except ten concubines, whom he left in his palace to keep houſe(e). The prieſts, with the ark, would alſo have gone with him; but he ordered them to remain in the city, as ſpies; to ſend him intelligence how matters went(f). Ahitophel, his prime miniſter, joined the malecontents(g); to balance which misfortune, David prevailed on Huſhai, a truſty man of ſome importance, to remain in the city, to ingratiate himſelf with Abſalom; counteract the counſels of Ahitophel, and tranſmit intelligence to him from time to time, through the conveyance of the prieſts Zadok and Abiathar; whoſe ſons were to carry on the correſpondence(h). Having concerted matters thus, he evacuated Jeruſalem, and Abſalom entered it(i).

When David was upon his journey from the city, he was overtaken by Ziba, ſervant to Mephiboſheth, with aſſes and proviſions for his majeſty's accommodation in his retreat(k): and when David inquired why Mephiboſheth did not come with him; this treacherous ſervant told him that he had ſtaid behind, hoping to obtain the kingdom of his grandfather, during this diſturbance(l): by which lie, he gained a grant of all his maſter's poſſeſſions.

Here an opportunity may be taken to introduce a circumſtance, which is ſo far material, as it ſerves to ſhew, that the ſanctity of David was not quite ſo univerſally aſſented to, as may be imagined, while he was living; and his actions not only freſh in memory, but better known, than was prudent to tranſmit to theſe diſtant ages.

As David proſecuted his flight, he was met by a man of Saul's family, whoſe name was Shimei. This man as he came



(a) 2 Sam. xv. 1. (b) Ver. 2. 4. (c) Ver. 7. (d) Ver. 12. 14. (e) Ver. 16. (f) Ver. 27. 28. (g) Ver. 12. 31. (h) Ver. 32, &c. (i) Ver. 37. (k) 2 Sam. xvi. 1. (l) Ver. 3.

on, kept muttering curſes between his teeth, and at length caſt ſtones at the king and his attendants, calling out to him, *Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: the Lord hath returned upon thee all the blood of the houſe of Saul, in whoſe ſtead thou haſt reigned, and the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Abſalom thy ſon: and behold thou art taken in thy miſchief, becauſe thou art a bloody man*(a). This is pathetic, and truly characteriſtic of the tyrant to whom the ſpeech was addreſſed. Some of his retinue were at the point of ſilencing this brawler, by taking off his head; but David prevented it,(b) wiſely conſidering that this was not a ſeaſon for proceeding to extremities.

Abſalom, in the mean time, being come to Jeruſalem; like a buck of ſpirit, took the damſels which his father had left to keep houſe, and inceſtuouſly cuckolded the old man by way of bravado, on the top of it(c); in a tent erected for that purpoſe!

Ahitophel was for ſelecting twelve thouſand men, and purſuing David directly, before he had time to recover his ſurprize(d); which was certainly the moſt politic reſolution that could have been formed. But Huſhai, as was concerted, propoſed a different plan of operations: oppoſing to the former, the well-known valour and military ſkill of the old king, and the hazard of making him and his men deſperate(e). He adviſed a collection of all the troops in the kingdom; that ſucceſs might be in a manner inſured: and that Abſalom ſhould command them in perſon. By which means, he affirmed that they ſhould overwhelm David and his party, wherever they might be found(f). Thus ended the council of war; Huſhai gained the aſcendancy; and when he knew that his ſcheme was accepted, he gave immediate notice to the prieſts(g): with inſtructions how David ſhould conduct himſelf(h): David divided his forces into three bodies; commanded by Joab, Abiſhai, and Ittai: but by the prudent care of his men, was not permitted to hazard his perſon, by being preſent in action(i). When he had reviewed his forces, he gave his generals eſpecial charge to preſerve the life of Abſalom; and with a policy that reflects honour upon his military knowledge, expected the enemy in the wood of Ephraim(k): a ſituation the moſt judicious that could be choſen, for a ſmall army to encounter one more numerous. David's men were tried veterans, among whom were the remains of thoſe who ſerved under, and lived with him at Gath(l); whereas, Abſalom's army muſt have conſiſted chiefly of freſh men. The battle

(a) 2 Sam. xvi. 7. 8. (b) Ver. 9. 10. (c) Ver. 21. 22. (d) Ch. xvii. 1. (e) Ver. 8. (f) 2 Sam. xvii. 12, &c. (g) Ver. 15. (h) Ver. 16. (i) Ch. xviii. 1. 2. 3. (k) Ver. 4. 5. 6. (l) 2 Sam. xv. 18.

battle was decided in favour of David(a); with great ſlaughter of the rebel army: and as Abſalom fled on a mule, his hair, celebrated for its beauty and quantity, became entangled in the boughs of an oak, and he remained ſuſpended in the air; while his mule ran away from between his legs(b). He was obſerved in this condition by a man who went and told Joab: and he, who conſulted the ſafety of David rather than his paternal weakneſs in behalf of an unnatural ſon, killed Abſalom with a dart(c).

David grieved immoderately for this reprobate ſon, on whom he had miſplaced a great affection(d); and though he had *acted* the mourner on ſeveral former occaſions, this is the only one, in which his ſincerity need not be queſtioned. It is true he might be really ſorry at the murder of Abner; but then the time muſt be attended to: Abner was killed prematurely; he had not finished his treacherous negociation; David had much to hope from him; but, when his expectations had been anſwered, it is far from being improbable, when we conſider his treatment of the Amalekite, and of Rechab and Baanah; that he would have found an opportunity himſelf to have got rid of a man, on whom he could have placed no reliance. But to return.

David was rouſed from his lamentations by the reproaches of his victorious General(e), who fluſhed with ſucceſs, told him the truth, but perhaps told it too coarſely. It is evident that Joab now loſt the favour of his maſter, of which the murder of Abner, the killing Abſalom in direct contradiction to David's expreſs order, and laſtly, his want of ſympathy, and his indelicacy in the preſent inſtance, were the undoubted cauſes.

After the battle, he invited Amaſa, Abſalom's General, to return to his duty; very imprudently and unaccountably, promiſing him the chief command of his army in the ſtead of Joab(f); ſeemingly but an unthankful return for the victory that officer had juſt gained him, and for his attachment to his intereſts all along. Amaſa, it is true, was a near relation; but Joab, according to Joſephus, ſtood in the ſame degree of conſanguinity; they being both ſons of David's ſiſters: this offer muſt therefore have been influenced by the perſonal qualities of the man; the importance of gaining him over, he being a perſon of great power and authority; and a reſentment againſt Joab, for the death of Abſalom.

The remains of Abſalom's ſcattered army diſperſed to their homes in the beſt, and moſt private manner they could(g): and

(a) 2 Sam. xviii. 7. (b) Ver. 9. (c) Ver. 14. (d) Ver. 33. Ch. xix. 4.
(e) Ch. xix. 5. 6. 7. (f) Ver. 13. (g) Ver. 3.

and David inadvertently plunged himſelf into freſh troubles, by ſuffering himſelf to be conducted home by a deputation from the tribe of Judah(a). This cauſed diſputes between that and the other tribes. They accuſed the tribe of Judah of ſtealing their king from them(b). Judah replied, that they gave their attendance, becauſe the king was of their tribe; and that it was of their own free will(c): the others rejoined that they had ten parts in the king, and that their advice ſhould have been aſked as to the bringing him back(d). At this juncture, one Sheba took advantage of this diſcontent, *and blew a trumpet, and ſaid, we have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the ſon of Jeſſe: every man to his tents, O Iſrael*(e). The conſequence of this, was a ſecond inſurrection. Amaſa was commiſſioned to ſuppreſs it: he accordingly aſſembled an army, and was joined by Joab and his men. But Joab, not thoroughly liking to ſerve under a man he had ſo lately vanquiſhed; and having as few ſcruples of conſcience as his old maſter had in the affair of Uriah's death, makes ſhort work, ſtabs Amaſa, and re-aſſumes the command of the whole army(f).

Being once again ſupreme in command, Joab applied himſelf directly to the reduction of the malecontent Sheba; who ſhut himſelf up in the city of Abel of Beth-maacha: he battered the walls, but by the negociation of a woman, the inhabitants agreed to throw Sheba's head to him over the wall, which they performed(g); and thus was quiet once more reſtored. Joab returned to Jeruſalem, where we are told that he was General over all the hoſt of Iſrael(h). Not a ſyllable appears of any notice taken by David of the murder of his General: and of the aſſaſſin's uſurping the command of the army!

We ſhall now obſerve, that when David was returning to Jeruſalem from the defeat of Abſalom's rebellion; with the men of Judah, who came to eſcort him, came alſo Shimei, the Benjamite(i), at the head of a party of his own tribe; who had at a former meeting, ſo freely beſtowed his maledictions on David when a fugitive, but who, upon this change of circumſtances, reflecting on David's vindictive temper, came now to make his ſubmiſſion, and aſk forgiveneſs. David accepted his acknowledgments, and confirmed his pardon with an oath(k).

*N. B.* We ſhall have occaſion to refer to this paſſage anon.

Mephiboſheth came alſo to meet David, and undeceive him with regard to the falſe Ziba's repreſentation of him; but

(a) 2 Sam. xix. 15. (b) Ver. 41. (c) Ver. 42. (d) Ver. 43. (e) Ch. xx. 1. (f) Ver. 7. 9. (g) Ver. 15. 16, &c. (h) Ver. 23. (i) Ch. xix. 16. (k) Ver. 23.

but he met with no other redreſs, than a remittance of *half the grant* made to Ziba of his eſtate(a).

Theſe inteſtine troubles put David upon ſecuring himſelf, as far as he could foreſee, from any future diſturbance.

It is the part of good politicians not only to form wiſe deſigns themſelves, but alſo to make a proper advantage of every public occurrence; that all things indiſcriminately may, more or leſs, lead to the deſired end. Of this we ſhall obſerve David to be mindful, in the enſuing tranſaction. Not that a panegyric upon David's cunning is by any means intended; for certainly a more bare-faced deceit was never exhibited: ſuch indeed as could have ſucceeded only among the poor bigoted Jews. It is ſufficient, however, that it anſwered David's purpoſe; for more could not have been obtained from the moſt compleat trick that refined politics ever produced. But, view it in a moral light, and a blacker piece of ingratitude and perfidy can hardly be imagined.

David having with much trouble, from his competition with Iſh-boſheth, eſtabliſhed himſelf upon the Jewiſh throne; and in the latter part of his reign been vexed and driven to diſagreeable extremities, by the rebellion of his ſon Abſalom; and having found the ſeditious humour of his ſubjects, not likely ſoon to ſubſide, when once excited; (as was evident by the revolt headed by Sheba, after Abſalom's party was cruſhed); and fearing leſt ſome of Saul's family, who were yet living, ſhould hereafter prove thorns in his side, concluded it expedient to cut them off.

Whenever David projected any ſcheme, a religious pretence, and the aſſiſtance of the prieſts, were never wanting. A famine befel Judea, probably occaſioned by the preceding inteſtine commotions, which continued three years. *David inquired of the Lord: and the Lord anſwered, it is for Saul, and for his bloody houſe, becauſe he ſlew the Gibeonites*(b). But, where is this crime recorded? Samuel charged Saul with no ſuch ſlaughter; he reproached him with a contrary fault, an act of *mercy!* which is aſſigned as the reaſon for depoſing him. So that God did not remember this crime(c), till many years after the man was dead! and then puniſhes—whom? a whole nation, with three years famine; which by the bye, was not ſent as a puniſhment neither; but merely as a hint of remembrance, which ended in hanging this guilty man's innocent children!

The

(a) 2 Sam. xix. 29. (b) Ch. xxi. 1. (c) If God ſought vengeance for a particular act of cruelty. perpetrated by Saul; when was vengeance demanded for David's maſſacre of the *Geſhurites*, the *Gezrites*, the *Amalekites*, the *Moabites*, the *Ammonites*, the *Jebuſites*; and others, who at times became the objects of David's wrath?

The oracular reſponſe dictated no act of expiation: but only mentioned the *cauſe* of the famine. So that the Gibeonites were applied to(a), for a knowledge of what recompence they demanded. (They had hitherto made no complaints.) They required no gifts, neither that for their ſakes David ſhould kill any man in Iſrael. (This qualifying expreſſion ſeems artfully intended; ſince they only required David to *deliver* the men *to them*, that *they* might kill them.) But that ſeven of Saul's ſons ſhould be ſurrendered to them, that they might hang them up, *unto the Lord*(b). David, not with-held by any motives of gratitude towards the poſterity of his unhappy father-in-law, in direct violation of his oath to Saul, at the cave of Engedi(c); granted the requeſt he muſt himſelf have inſtigated(d): ſparing only Mephiboſheth; who was ſo fortunate as to be a cripple, and ſo much a dependant on David, that he had no room for apprehenſion from him. He therefore reſerved Mephiboſheth, in memory of another oath, between him and his father Jonathan.

David's conſcience was of convenient dimenſions: he was under obligation by two oaths; he forgot one, and remembered the other. It was like that of Creon in Oedipus, who being interrogated concerning his conſcience, replied.

*—'Tis my ſlave, my drudge, my ſupple glove,*
*My upper garment, to put on, throw off,*
*As I think beſt: 'tis my obedient conſcience.*

David now thinking himſelf ſecurely ſettled, was moved both by God(e) and by Satan (f), to cauſe his ſubjects to be numbered; which is, oddly enough, imputed as a great ſin in him to require. for poor man he was but a paſſive inſtrument in the affair. Even David ſhould have his due. The prophet Gad, by divine commiſſion, called him to account for it: and as a puniſhment for *David's crime*, propounded to him for his choice, three kinds of plagues, one of which, *his ſubjects* thereby neceſſarily incurred. Seven years famine, three months perſecution from enemies; or three days peſtilence(g). David choſe the latter.

It may be as well to wave this ſtory, as to enter into any more particular conſideration of it.

We have now attended David down to the decline of his life; when his natural heat ſo far decayed, that no addition of cloathing(h) could retain a proper degree of warmth. His phyſicians preſcribed a young woman to cheriſh him in his bed,

(a) 2 Sam. xxi. 2. 3. (b) Ver. 6. (c) 1 Sam. xxiv. 21. 22. (d) 2. Sam. xxi. 6. (e) Ch. xxiv. 1. (f) 1 Chron. xxi. 1. (g) 2 Sam. xxiv. 13. 1 Chron. xxi. 12. (h) 1 Kings i. 1.

bed, by imparting to him a ſhare of juvenile heat(a). This remedy, may be very expedient in caſes of extreme age; but why beauty ſhould be a neceſſary quality in the medicine, it is difficult to conceive. They ſought a *fair damſel*; and the damſel they found, was *very fair* (b). Poſſibly David might himſelf direct the delicacy of the choice: but if his phyſicians intended it as a compliment to their maſter, it indicated a very inſufficient knowledge of the animal œconomy; thus to ſtimulate the old man, and harraſs a carcaſs already ſufficiently worn out: whereas, a virgin of homelier features, would have furniſhed an equal degree of warmth, at the ſame time that ſhe would have been leſs liable to put wicked thoughts in her patient's head. However, the hiſtorian has taken care to inform us, that *the king knew her not* (c); an aſſertion, which from the premiſes, there does not appear the leaſt reaſon to controvert.

While the king lay in this debilitated extremity of life, he was deſtined to experience yet another mortification from his children. Adonijah, his eldeſt ſon, ſince the death of Abſalom; taking advantage of his father's incapacity, like a fool aſſumed the title of king(d), which, had he been a little leſs precipitate, would have ſoon fallen to him, perhaps, without conteſt. He found means to allure Abiathar the prieſt over to his party, together with David's old general Joab: the latter, it is probable, being ſufficiently prone to revolt, ſince the affront put upon him, by ſuperſeding him in favour of Amaſa. Thus ſtrengthened, it is poſſible he might have maintained his anticipated dignity; had he not, like Saul before, ſlighted his moſt powerful friends; he made an entertainment for his party, to which he invited all his brothers, except Solomon(e). But, what ruined him, was his not inviting Nathan the prophet; it was there the grudge began; and the excluſion from this merry bout, cauſed the prophet's loyalty to exert itſelf(f), which might probably have been ſuppreſſed by a due ſhare of Adonijah's good cheer.

Let not the honeſt reader accuſe the writer of putting a malicious conſtruction upon every tranſaction he produces. Let him turn to his bible: in the tenth verſe of the firſt chapter of the firſt book of Kings, he will find that Nathan was not called to the feaſt. The very next verſe begins, WHEREFORE, *Nathan ſpake unto Bath-ſheba, the mother of Solomon*, &c.

Nathan and Bath ſheba concerted to tell David of this matter(g); where the liquoriſh prophet could not forget his loſs of the banquet, but, it being uppermoſt in his mind, he complains

(a) 1 Kings i. 2 (b) Ver. 3. 4. (c) Ver. 4. (d) Ver. 5. (e) Ver. 9. 10. (f) Ver. 11. (g) Ver. 13.

complains to the king of it, in an earneſt manner; *but me, even me thy ſervant——hath he not called*[a]; which ſpoke the cauſe of his officious loyalty pretty plainly. David here acknowledges a promiſe by which he waved the right of primogeniture, in favour of Solomon, Bath-ſheba's ſon[b]. He now directed him to be ſet upon a mule, proclaimed and anointed king of Iſrael; by his appointment[c]. The acclamations of the people upon this raree ſhew, diſturbed the oppoſite party at their table; and this event, ſo unexpected, quite diſconcerted them; they all diſperſed[d]; and Adonijah ran to the temple, and took ſanctuary at the altar. He obtained of Solomon a conditional promiſe of pardon[e]; depending on his good behaviour. Solomon ſoon found a pretence ridiculous enough; but ſufficient in his eyes, to get rid of Adonijah; when his father was dead.

And now, methinks, ſome gentlewoman, of more than feminine patience, whoſe curioſity has prevailed with her to proceed thus far, may here exclaim. 'It muſt be granted, 'Sir! that David had his faults; and who has not? but what 'does that prove? only that he was a man. If he was frail, 'his repentance was exemplary; as you may perceive, if you 'can prevail with yourſelf to read ſome of his pſalms.[f] 'Indeed, after your ill-treatment of the ſcripture, it will avail 'little to tell you that you contradict thoſe inſpired penmen, 'who expreſsly ſtile David *the man after God's own heart*. Nay, 'your writing againſt him under that epithet, ſhews ſufficiently the rancour and impiety of *your heart*; ſo that I am 'fearful there are no hopes of reclaiming you.'——— Good madam! hear me calmly, and we ſhall part excellent friends yet. Had David not been ſelected from the reſt of mankind, why then—it is poſſible—hardly poſſible—he might, paſs in the groſs, with the reſt of kings. But, when he is exalted and placed in a conſpicuous point of view, and repreſented as an eminent example of piety! he then neceſſarily attracts our notice in an eſpecial manner: and we are naturally led to wonder that a more happy ſubject of panegyric had not been choſen. If he was an holy pſalmiſt: if he is ſtiled the man after God's own heart; he alſo lived the life I have exhibited; and his capability of uniting theſe extremes, does but augment his guilt.

If David was ever truly pious, we ſhall certainly perceive it in his behaviour on his death bed. *There*, it is to be hoped, we ſhall find him forgiving his enemies, and dying in charity with all mankind. This is what all mankind in general make a point

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[a] 1 Kings. i. 26. [b] Ver. 30. [c] Ver. 33. 38. [d] Ver. 41. 49. 50. [e] Ver. 52.

[f] As a ſpecimen, ſee Pſalm 68, 23.—69, 23, 24, &c.—137, 8, 9.

a point of; from the ſaint to the malefactor. David therefore muſt certainly give us an extraordinary inſtance of his attention to this important evidence of contrition. But what ſhall we think when we ſee this Nero of the Hebrews die in a manner uniform and conſiſtent with the whole courſe of his life? What will be our reflections when we find him, with his laſt accents, delivering two murders in charge to his ſon Solomon? One of them to be executed on his old faithful general Joab; who powerfully aſſiſted him on all occaſions, and adhered to him in all his extremities; till at the laſt, when he had juſtifiable cauſe for chagrin: but who notwithſtanding had not appeared againſt him in actual hoſtility. It will avail nothing to plead the private faults of the man; we are here to conſider him as in his public capacity. In which light we muſt loath the maſter, who died meditating black ingratitude, againſt ſo faithful, ſo uſeful, a ſervant.

His other charge was againſt Shemei, who had reviled him at his retreat from Jeruſalem, during Abſalom's rebellion; but who made his ſubmiſſion when David returned victorious: and whoſe pardon he had guaranteed with a *ſolemn oath*(a).

Let us now attend to the cauſe of theſe reflections.

After exhorting Solomon on his death-bed, to keep the ſtatutes of the Lord, David proceeds.

*Moreover thou knoweſt alſo what Joab, the ſon Zeruiah, did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the hoſts of Iſrael, unto Abner the ſon of Ner, and unto Amaſa the ſon of Jether, whom he ſlew, and ſhed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his ſhoes that were on his fee*

*Do therefore according to thy wiſdom,* AND LET NOT HIS HOAR HEAD GO DOWN TO THE GRAVE IN PEACE(b).

This was afterwards fulfilled in the baſeſt manner, by the adminiſtrator to this pious teſtament.

David concludes thus:

*And behold, thou haſt with thee Shimei the ſon of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which curſed me with a grievous curſe, in the day when I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan and I ſware to him by the Lord, ſaying, I will not put thee to death with the ſword.*

*Now therefore hold him not guiltleſs: for thou art a wiſe man, and knoweſt what thou oughteſt to do unto him;* BUT HIS HOAR



(a) 2 Sam. xix. 23. (b) 1 Kings ii. 5. 6.

HEAD BRING THOU DOWN TO THE GRAVE WITH BLOOD(a). So ſaying, he expired!

This command was alſo executed in a manner, worthy the ſon of SUCH A FATHER!

To take a retroſpect view of the foregoing narrative; we may in few words ſee the ſum total of the whole. A ſhepherd youth was choſen by a diſguſted Levite, to be the inſtrument of his revenge upon an untractable king. To this end he was inſpired with ambitious hopes, by a private inauguration was introduced to court, in the capacity of a harper; and by knocking down with a ſtone, a giant, whom, if he had miſſed once, he had four more chances of hitting; and from whom, at the laſt, he could have eaſily ran away; he was advanced to the dignity of ſon-in-law to the king. So ſudden and unlooked for a promotion, within ſight of the throne, ſtimulated expectations already awakened; and Saul ſoon found reaſons to repent his alliance with him. Being obliged to retire from court, he aſſembled a gang of Ruffians, the outcaſts of their country, and became captain over this company of Banditti. In this capacity he ſeduced his brother-in-law Jonathan, from his allegiance and filial duty; and covenanted with him, that if he ſhould obtain the kingdom, he (Jonathan,) ſhould be the next perſon in authority under him. He obtained a ſettlement in the dominions of a Philiſtine prince, where, inſtead of applying himſelf laudably to the arts of cultivation, he ſubſiſted by plundering and butchering the neighbouring nations. He offered his aſſiſtance to the Philiſtine armies, in the war againſt his own country, and father-in-law; and was much diſguſted at their diſtruſt of his ſincerity. He however availed himſelf of the defeat and death of Saul, and made a puſh for the kingdom. Of this he gained only his own tribe of Judah: but ſtrengthened by this uſurpation, he conteſted the remainder with Saul's ſon, Iſhboſheth. Upon a quarrel between king Iſhboſheth, and his general Abner; the treacherous Abner entered into a treaty with David, engaged to deſert his maſter, and eſtabliſh him over the whole kingdom. This however the death of Abner circumvented: but the aſſaſſination of Iſh-boſheth by two villains with intention to pay their court to the uſurper, compleated it at one ſtroke. He then became king of Iſrael. In which capacity he plundered and maſſacred all his neighbours round him at diſcretion, He defiled the wife of one of his officers, while her huſband was abſent in the army: and finding ſhe was with child by him, he, to prevent a diſcovery, added murder to adultery; which being

(a) 1 Kings ii. 8. 9.

being accompliſhed, he took the widow directly into his *well-ſtocked* ſeraglio. He then repaired to the army, where, taking a city named Rabbah, he uſed the inhabitants with the moſt wanton inhumanity. A rebellion was raiſed againſt him by his ſon Abſalom; which he ſuppreſſed, and invited over the rebel-general, to whom he gave the ſupreme command of his army to the prejudice of the victorious Joab. After this he cut off the remainder of Saul's family, ſeven ſons, in defiance of the ſolemn oath to which he engaged to ſpare that unhappy race: reſerving only one cripple, from whom he could have no apprehenſions: and who, being the ſon of Jonathan, gave him the opportunity of making a merit of his gratitude. When he lay on his death bed, where all mankind reſign their reſentments and animoſities, his lateſt breath was employed in dictating two poſthumous murders to his ſon Solomon! and as if one crime more were wanting to compleat the black catalogue; he cloathed all his infamous actions with the moſt conſummate hypocriſy: profeſſing all along, the greateſt regard for every appearance of virtue and holineſs.

Theſe, Chriſtians! are the outlines of the life of a *Jew*, whom you are not aſhamed to continue extolling, as the man after God's own heart!

This, Britons, is the king to whom your late excellent monarch is compared!

What an impiety to the majeſty of Heaven!

What an affront to the memory of an honeſt prince!

It is with great joy the writer of theſe memoirs takes his leave of a ſtory, of which, by this time, he is ſufficiently weary. He enter'd upon it, however, from honeſt motives; and he concludes it with the conſciouſneſs of having performed a work, which he flatters himſelf will prove acceptable to all who entertain adequate notions of the eternal rectitude of the creator, whom they profeſs to adore. Thoſe who eſtimate a man's religion by his implicitneſs, and think it their duty to ſtifle their living objections in compliance to the dead letter; (for objections they will have, and very ſtrong ones too) ſuch will undoubtedly be ſhocked at this publication. Such will produce numerous texts in oppoſition to what is here produced; and can inſpired writings be inconſiſtent with themſelves? It is not at preſent neceſſary to diſcuſs that queſtion. Argue that point among yourſelves; the printer will at leaſt profit by your diſputes; though you may happen to.

——— *Explain a thing 'till all men doubt it,*
*And write about it, Goddeſs, and about it:*
*So ſpins the ſilk-worm ſmall its ſlender ſtore,*
*And labours 'till it clouds itſelf all o'er.*

This, yet, is none of my concern, The love of truth is a motive

motive which ought to supersede every other consideration; for every other consideration is inferior, in comparison with it. Truth requires no tenderness in the investigation of it; and scorns all subterfuges. It is, when displayed,

——————— *divinely bright,*
*One clear, unchang'd, and universal light.*

To rescue truth, therefore, from obscurity and disguise, is the most rational way of giving

*Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace good will toward men.*

*FINIS.*